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Perceptions of Domestic Violence

by

Kama Jamieson

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Education

Department of Educational Psychology

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring, 1999

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my son, Colby Jamieson.

ABSTRACT

This study is designed to further our understanding of perceptions and attitudes towards domestic violence. Some evidence indicates that men are the victims of spousal abuse in equal numbers to women. Although there is a growing awareness of this problem, it tends to lack the credibility of wife abuse.

In this study, 172 university students were randomly assigned to read one of eight scenarios in a 2 (gender of abuser) x 2 (type of violence) x 2 (degree of violence) between groups factorial design. The participants read the scenarios and completed a questionnaire to assess their perceptions of the incident.

The results suggest that degree of abuse and type of abuse are instrumental in university students' perceptions of the situation and in their perceptions of the victim. Interestingly, gender of the abuser influenced students attitudes toward the offender and affected the type of punishment they thought should be carried out.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

When people hear the terms spousal abuse and domestic violence, images of Hedda Nussbaum, Nicole Brown-Simpson, or other similarly beaten and victimized women come to mind. During the past thirty years volumes of research and information regarding wife abuse has become available. As a result, wife abuse is a widely acknowledged and publicized problem in our society. On the other hand, husband abuse is given comparatively little thought. Many people argue that it does not need to be examined; that it rarely, if ever, occurs; or that women are incapable of inflicting the same kind of damage as men. When individuals do consider husband battering, it tends to be the subject of scorn and ridicule. A wife chasing her husband with a rolling pin is a common image for jokes and comics.

Although husband abuse has not received the same attention as wife abuse, some researchers have estimated that approximately equal numbers of men and women are the victims of spousal violence (Bland,& Orne, 1986; McLeod, 1988; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980.) However, there are few available resources for abused men. In fact, in 1985, the director of a Calgary women's shelter, which had turned away battered husbands stated "Men

control the money in this society. They can afford to go elsewhere" (Fennell, 1985). It is possible, however, that this attitude may be changing. It was recently reported that a shelter, specifically for abused men, was opened in Winnipeg. This is the first shelter of its kind in Manitoba. (Edmonton Journal, 1998).

The lack of public concern for husband abuse is reflected in the paucity of research conducted on this subject. To illustrate the disparity between research involving husband abuse and other types of domestic violence, a search of a national databank (Psych Info 1988-1998) was conducted.[1] Five articles related to husband abuse were uncovered, compared to 843 articles that were related to wife abuse, and 212 that dealt with elder abuse.

This overall lack of concern regarding the abused husband may be a reflection of society's perceptions and attitudes about men's and women's roles as abuser and abused, respectively. The purpose of the present research is to examine people's attitudes toward spousal abuse. The study is designed to assess university students' views toward male versus female abuse. In addition,

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[1] Wife abuse and elder abuse figures were taken from subject headings offered in Psych info. The husband abuse figure was found by searching the terms battered husband, abused husband, husband battering, and husband abuse.

student's perceptions about physical versus verbal abuse and degree of severity of abuse were investigated. It is important that we come to an understanding of the views held by the public toward husband versus wife abuse. In coming to an understanding of how the public may be biased, we can better service the families that are the victims of domestic violence.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Domestic Violence

It has only been in relatively recent history that domestic violence has entered the public spotlight. In the 1970's wife abuse began to be acknowledged as a societal problem (Russel, 1983). Even after it was acknowledged it was not always treated seriously. In 1982, the members of the House of Commons reacted with laughter and disbelief when the results of the "Status of Women: Parliamentary Report on Battered Wives- Government Action"" was discussed. This report indicated that 1 in 10 women in Canada are victims of domestic violence. Victim blaming was another common response during this time period. Many researchers (Campbell, 1991) felt that if women were unhappy in an abusive situation they could simply leave. However, we now accept that wife abuse is a much more complex issue.

Husband abuse as a societal problem is currently misunderstood and not believed, just as wife abuse was twenty years ago. Although, the presence of both was uncovered at roughly the same time, husband abuse has failed to attract the same amount of attention as wife abuse. It has been suggested that this is due to three factors (Lucal, 1995). Firstly, wife abuse conforms to the

societal gender roles of men and women. That is, wife abuse reinforces the idea of men as stronger and aggressive and of women as weak and victimized. Secondly, the awareness of wife abuse coincided with the feminist movement. The issue of wife abuse came to the public's attention at the same time as the feminist movement; as a result, feminist groups focused on the problem. Lastly, wife abuse has received widespread professional and media attention, keeping the issue in the spotlight. So far, nothing similar has occurred in terms of a men's rights movement. Research involving husband abuse has been sporadic and not well received. Wife abuse had all the right ingredients to become a national issue in the seventies and early eighties, and, consequently, our understanding of it has helped to make significant advances in the last twenty years. As well, we have gained increasing insight into the issues of child and elder abuse. However, the issue of husband abuse has yet to receive national awareness and attention. It is possible that this is slowly changing as the public increasingly accepts a zero tolerance policy in regard to domestic violence.

Definitions of Abuse

For purposes of this research, it is important to have a clear understanding of what constitutes spousal abuse. For example, one definition

(Buzawa & Buzawa, 1996 p. 4) is that domestic violence is violence between heterosexual adults who are living together or who have previously cohabited. Initially, the focus tended to be primarily on physical violence; now the definition of spousal abuse has been expanded to include both psychological and physical abuse. Indeed, Martin & Younger-Lewis (1998) have broken domestic violence into eight separate categories. These authors include emotional, social, financial, religious, physical, sexual and ritual abuse as distinct types of domestic violence.

Broadly defined, physical abuse is any unwanted contact (Martin & Younger-Lewis, 1998). More specifically, it is physical contact with the intent to harm or injure the other person. This can involve throwing an object, pushing, shoving, slapping, using a weapon and a wide range of other actions that one intended to cause physical injury to the other person. Generally, the less severe forms of physical violence are more frequent than the severe forms. For example, pushing and shoving occur more frequently than using a knife or a gun.

Although, physical abuse is the most recognized of the various types of abuse, it has been argued that psychological/verbal abuse can have as harmful and long lasting effects as physical abuse (Vanglistic, 1994). Even so, research

has found that police and the public do not rate psychological abuse as serious or as violent as physical abuse.(Lavioe, Jacob, Hardy & Martin, 1989)

The behaviours that constitute psychological or emotional abuse are as diverse as physically abusive behaviours. Put-downs, threats of abandonment, false accusations and threats of suicide may all constitute abusive behaviour. Generally, abusive behaviour is meant to control and hurt the other individual.

Although our understanding of abuse has expanded to include a wide variety of actions and behaviours, it remains exceedingly focused on gender-specific roles. That is, domestic violence, spousal abuse, and partner abuse tend to be viewed as synonymous with wife battering. For the purpose of this research, spousal abuse will be defined as any violence, either physical or psychological that takes place between two co-habituating adults (a male and a female) with the intention of causing harm.

Husband abuse

Perceptions of abused men. Historically, men who were victims of husband abuse were ridiculed and humiliated in public. In eighteenth and nineteenth century France, husbands who were beaten by their wives were

made to wear an outlandish outfit and ride backwards on a donkey around the village (Stein 1977-78). Men who allowed themselves to be victimized and who lost control of their wives were seen to be in need of chastisement. This history of degradation and humiliation has, in many ways, continued into modern times.

Saenger (1963) examined 20 consecutive editions of comics in nine leading New York city newspapers and found that in 63 percent of conflict situations, husbands were the victims of hostility and attack, compared with 39 percent of the wives. Furthermore, 14 percent of the males in domestic situations were the recipients of physical aggression, compared to one percent of the females. In 73 percent of the domestic situation comic strips, wives were more aggressive than husbands, in 10 percent both partners were equal, and in 17 percent the husbands were more aggressive than the wives. We are allowed to laugh at these comic images of battered men, because they seem far removed from domestic reality. In the "serious" real world, men are supposed to be strong and aggressive while women are the weak, nurturing partners. Even if we accept the fact that wives hit and mistreat their husbands this behaviour is minimized because "real" men are not supposed to be affected by female aggression and violence. These popular misconceptions have

contributed to our present ignorance in the area of husband battering.

Prevalence of husband abuse. In a few surveys of spousal abuse (Blyes, 1978; Steinmetz, 1977; Vanfossen, 1979) researchers have found minimal evidence of husband battering. For example, Blyes found that only 5 percent of victims of spousal abuse were men. A slightly higher estimate of 10 percent was given in Vanfossen's (1979) examination of case files of domestic disturbances in Monroe Country, New York. From this evidence, one might conclude that husband abuse rarely happens. However, there is a serious methodological flaw in these studies. Samples were drawn from police reports and other agencies that aid battered women. The problem with this is that men are less likely to report spousal abuse (Mcleod, 1988; Pearson, 1997; Straus 1977-78). Therefore these studies may seriously under represent the proportion of men who are abused.

Gelles (1974) was one of the first researchers to use a sample that included individuals from the general population. Even in Gelles' study, however, half of the sample was drawn from police records and social service agencies. Nevertheless his results showed surprisingly similar rates for both husband and wife abuse. Forty-seven percent of husbands had used physical violence on their wives and 33 percent of wives had used physical violence on

their husbands.

These findings should not have come as a surprise because it had already been demonstrated that in cases of extreme violence, such as homicide, levels had always been similar (Curtis, 1974; Wolfgang, 1958). Even though the evidence suggested that female aggression was more wide spread than the previous research indicated, it has been virtually ignored and the focus continues to be on wife abuse.

Steinmetz (1977-78) was one of the first researchers to identify and label husband abuse. In her article "The Battered Husband Syndrome" she presents the results of several surveys that demonstrate that husband abuse is not rare and is as frequent as wife abuse. She suggested that researchers had tended to selectively attend to the results of their data, and had been ignoring the problem of husband abuse. Her findings created a great deal of controversy, and her research was attacked and criticized (Paleglow, 1984). Critics suggested that female violence was in response to male aggression and was, in fact, self-defence. As well, many argued that husbands would not be as seriously injured as wives, and therefore husband abuse was not important.

In a survey, conducted in 1975, by Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) a sample of 2143 (married or co-habituating) couples were interviewed about

several different aspects of their family life. The survey included a section called "The Physical Violence Index of the Conflict Scale" which asked about the frequency of several different acts of spousal abuse, These acts were: 1) threw things, 2) pushed or shoved, 3) hit or slapped, 4) hit with something, 5) threatened with a gun or knife, 6) used a gun or knife, and 7)used any violence. Within these categories, men and women's scores were similar. Women scored the same or slightly higher for all the categories but "pushed or shoved". The results of this survey indicated that wives and husbands use similar amounts of violent behaviour in their relationships.

Ten years later Straus and Gelles (1986) carried out a similar surrey and compared the findings to their original data. In this sample , 3,520 co-habituating or married couples took part in a telephone interview. As part of the survey, they were asked about the same acts of aggression as in the original survey. The researchers also categorized the acts of violence in terms of "overall violence" and "severe violence".

The study showed a promising drop in the amount of wife abuse. In 1975 approximately 12.1 percent of respondents reported at least one violent incident of husband-to-wife aggression, compared with 11.3 percent in 1985. Severe husband-to-wife violence had dropped from 3.8 percent to 3.0 percent.

Straus and Gelles pointed out that this represents a 26.6 percent decrease in the rate of severe violence against wives. However, no decrease in overall violence occurred for battered men. In fact, husband abuse appeared to have risen slightly from 11.6 percent in 1975 to 12.1 percent in 1985. Severe violence against men decreased slightly, from 4.6 percent to 4.4 percent.

These findings suggest a trend in spousal violence. It is possible that an increased awareness of wife battering has had a positive effect on the amount of husband -to-wife violence. Whereas, the consistency in reported husband abuse could reflect the fact this problem has been ignored. Straus and Gelles state that "violence by women has not been an area of public concern. There has been no publicity and no funds have been invested in ameliorating this problem, because it has not been defined as a problem." (p.472)

Since the original Steinmetz (1977) paper on husband battering, many other researchers have found similar evidence for husband abuse (Brinkerhoff & Lupri, 1988, Nisonoff & Bitman, 1979: Russell & Hulson, 1992). In a Canadian sample (Brinkerhoff& Lupri, 1988) of 562 Calgary couples, both partners were included in the data collection. One was interviewed and the other filled out a questionnaire. In terms of overall violence, 13.2 percent of the couples reported exclusively wife-to-husband abuse, 10.3 percent reported

husband-to-wife abuse and mutual violence was reported in 14.3 percent of the couples. The researchers found that in 4.8 percent of the couples there was severe husband-to-wife abuse, in 10.4 percent there was severe wife-to-husband abuse, and in 6.0 percent both partners were severely abusive. This study found that female-to-male abuse occurs most frequently in young, childless, and co-habituating couples. These results suggest that husband abuse tends to be more common in couples where the exchange relationship is characterized by a fairly equal distribution of resources and both partners are relatively independent.

Dating violence. Along a similar line of research, it has been established that female-to-male partner abuse starts early in the relationship. Studies have found evidence that violence by both partners usually begins in the dating relationship (Carlson, 1987; Lane & Gwartney, 1985). It also occurs in teenage dating couples (O'Keefe, Brockopp,& Chew, 1986). This indicates that abuse is a pattern that begins at a young age and early in the relationship for both males and females.

Importance of studying husband abuse. Although there is evidence to demonstrate that husband abuse does occur, little research has been conducted on this topic. Up to this point the majority of energy devoted to husband

abuse has focused on prevalence rates. There has been heated debate concerning the reliability and validity of such figures because of problems with notoriously poor reporting and self-reporting techniques. It may no longer be relevant to debate the existence and severity of husband abuse compared to wife abuse. Perhaps it is more appropriate to simply accept its existence, and attempt to determine how husband abuse is viewed by the broader social community. We need to question how individual's beliefs and perceptions are affected. In this way we can begin to accept our own biases regarding this issue and attempt to approach the issue objectively.

Popular misconceptions about men and women have guided the type of research that has been conducted. Opponents of the battered husband syndrome have given several reasons why husband abuse is not important. They argue that women are only violent in response to male violence; that husbands are not affected by the abuse; that it is women who are seriously injured in spousal abuse; and that men have the financial resources and power to leave the relationship if they choose (Green, 1994).

It may seem obvious that men are more capable of inflicting more serious harm than women, but battering consists of more than physical strength. Individuals must have the will to knowingly inflict harm on someone

they care about. It might be argued that a man can defend himself or retaliate effectively, but men are taught from a very young age not to hit women, and therefore many may be reluctant to defend themselves against attack.

There is evidence that women can and do inflict serious harm on their husbands. A review of court cases of husband battering (Bates,1981) found evidence of bullying, massive ill treatment, and acts that caused danger to life and limb. It might be argued that the number of husbands who are severely injured is insignificant. Reports of medical care researchers estimate that 12 to 13 percent of abuse victims who seek medical care are men . However, this method of estimating injury may be faulty because men may be less likely to seek medical attention than women and when they do seek medical attention they may be less likely to admit to being abused. Reports of actual injuries suggest that the percentage is closer to 20 or 30 percent (Young, 1994). Although, this is still a small figure, it is far from insignificant.

Mcleod (1984) used 6200 cases of domestic assaults reported to law enforcement authorities and a national victimization data report to the National Crime Survey to study spousal abuse. She found that men constituted 6 percent of all the self-reported spousal assault. In her review, in 25 percent of all cases where women were the victims, a weapon was used,

whereas 86 percent of the victimization of men included a weapon. As well, she found that a greater proportion of male victims were injured, and they were generally injured more seriously than female victims. This is most likely due to the fact that incidents involving wife-to- husband aggression will only be reported if the victim is injured seriously or if a weapon is involved.

Battered men may be afraid to report their victimization or to press charges. They face the possibility of being ostracized and humiliated. This fear is not unfounded. Pearson (1997) gives an example of a husband who charged his abusive wife only to have the judge laugh at the charges in court. For this reason it is difficult to estimate the true amount of husband battering and injury to men that occurs.

Another excuse for the disproportionate amount of time and energy that has gone into the study of husband abuse is the belief that men are more independent. Therefore, they are able to leave the violent relationship. Researchers have suggested that the battered male has the financial power to leave the relationship if he chooses and, furthermore, he is in need of counselling if he does not leave (Paleglow, 1984). Often men have the same reasons for staying in a violent relationship as women. They cannot afford to leave and fear for their children's safety. Men who leave have to face the

financial burden of support payments and of maintaining a separate residence. They also run the risk of losing custody of their children. In some situations they might stay in the relationship because they fear for their children's safety if they leave (Pearson, 1997).

There is also the view that spousal abuse is not as harmful to men as it is to women. Some have argued that men can laugh it off (George, 1994) or that it does not affect their self-esteem the same way that it affects a woman's (Mills, 1984). There is also the belief that men are accepting and unconcerned about their wives' assaults and feel that there is no reason to leave the relationship (George, 1994). Again, these beliefs arise from male stereotypes. Farrell (1986) points out that as a society we take violence against men far less seriously than violence against women. Men are expected to be able to handle physical pain and discomfort. They are not allowed to express their emotions the same way as women can.

Little attention is paid to why women abuse. Many researchers frame the question of husband abuse in terms of a woman defending herself against attack from her stronger, more aggressive husband. (Sauders, 1986; Walker, 1989). Again, these studies tend to focus on women already identified as battered and on those who perceive themselves as victims. This type of

research attempts to fit the notion of husband abuse into the stereotyped roles of men and women. This ignores the fact that wives are often the only aggressive partner in the relationship (Brinkerhoff & Lupri, 1988; Russell & Hulson, 1992).

Furthermore, Mcleod (1984) found evidence that the couples that report husband battering are qualitatively different than the couples that experienced wife abuse. She reasoned that if husband abuse is self-defence against an abusive husband, these couples should be similar to one another but, in fact, they are quite different. As well, it is important to take into consideration that not all abuse is physical. The majority of studies on husband abuse tend to focus on physical abuse and ignore psychological abuse. Yet, in some instances psychological violence can be equally as abusive. In terms of their ability to perpetrate emotional, verbal, and psychological abuse, men and women are equal. It has been suggested by researchers that women tend to use these forms of indirect aggression far more frequently than men (Björkquist, Österman, Kaukianinen, 1992).

The controversy surrounding husband abuse has been heated. It has been suggested that proponents of recognition of wife abuse fear that research and acknowledgement of husband abuse will take away from the issue of wife

abuse. The methods of data collection have been attacked and it has been suggested that the statistics do not show the complete picture. In addition, it has been argued that the severity of injury in wife abuse is a great deal more than that of the victims of husband abuse. There has also been the suggestion that men precipitate their own victimization by being emotionally unresponsive, inattentive , physically weak or disabled (George, 1994). None of these excuses justifies the acts of violence perpetrated on men. These views are similar to the unacceptable victim blaming that occurs against women who stay in violent relationships. No one, male or female, should be a victim of violence, especially in their own home at the hands of a family member.

Public perceptions of husband abuse. Many of the problems and criticisms surrounding research on husband abuse have arisen from the stereotypes of men and women in our society. Harris (1991) found that sex of the victim and of the aggressor are major factors in evaluating an act of aggression. In her study, participants were given one of two scenarios to read. The researcher manipulated the sex of the aggressor, the sex of the victim and the relationship between them (i.e., friends, strangers, siblings). Findings indicated that the participants rated the aggression less seriously if a woman aggressed against a male. Women were also viewed more positively for

retaliating than men were. Participants reported that in situations of husband abuse the woman was asserting herself and that the man deserved the physical punishment.

Another study dealt specifically with the effects of the gender of the victim and the gender of the batterer on people's perceptions of spousal abuse (Harris & Cook, 1994). Participants read one of several fictitious police reports and answered questions regarding their perceptions of the situations. The scenarios involved heterosexual couples in which the gender of the abuser and victim were manipulated, and also scenarios with a male homosexual couple. Participants read one of the scenarios and then filled out several questions regarding their perceptions of the incident. Questions included how responsible the victims was, how likely the participant would be to call the police, how responsible the batterer was, how much they liked the victim, and whether the victim should leave the relationship. Harris and Cook found that both male batterers and male victims were judged more responsible than females, that participants liked female victims more, and that they would be more likely to call the police for a female victim. The participants also felt more strongly that wives should leave their abusive husbands. This research suggests that people do not confer the same level of seriousness to male

victimization as to female victimization.

It has been suggested that perceptions about spousal abuse influence the justice system and that on the whole , women tend to be punished less severely than their male counterparts (Farell, 1986). In a recent example, (Edmonton Journal, July 7, 1998) a woman in British Columbia pleaded guilty to aggregated assault. She had mutilated her husband by cutting off his penis and flushing it down the toilet. The reason she gave for her actions was her husband's infidelity; she felt her actions would stop her husband's affairs and cause him to be more dependent on her. She also stated that she did it because "I love him so much". For her crime she received a two year conditional sentence; she spent one day in prison. In comparison a man who pleaded guilty to wife abuse and admitted to arguing with his wife, although he denied hitting her, was given a similar sentence. (Globe and Mail, January 31, 1997). In this instance the victim suffered bruises to her neck and to the left side of her face. The offender received 18 months parole, mandatory enrollment in an education program on domestic violence and a $200 fine. As well, he spent 21 hours in prison. This demonstrates a considerable discrepancy in the treatment of male and female abusers. Both offenders received similar punishments for vastly dissimilar crimes.

With a history of male dominance and comic images assailing us, it is no wonder that male victimization has taken a backseat to wife abuse. The women's movement has allowed much of society's unjust treatment of women to come to light, but no such action has occurred for men. Men are still perceived as powerful and women as victims. In reality, this view does injustice to both genders. Not only does it condone the victimization of men, it does not give women credit for being strong and active. Instead they are continually cast in the role of helpless and passive victims. In order to understand spousal abuse, it is important to address all sides of the issue, not just the side that reflects society's stereotypes.

Rational For the Present Study

Although it is possible that husband abuse dose not inflict the same amount of physical damage on men as wife abuse does on women, it is still far from unimportant. Even if we take the most conservative estimates of husband abuse, more than 10% of men in all violent domestic relationships are the victims of abuse. As well, it is important to realize that this figure does not take into consideration the psychological abuse that is occurring. In psychological and verbal abuse, the female/male strength ratio is equalized.

Previous studies (Harris,1991; Harris & Cook,1994) have shown

inequalities in people's perceptions of husband and wife abuse. Husband abuse is not taken as seriously as wife abuse. Men abusers and victims are held more responsible than women. People also report liking male victims less and are more likely to intervene in instances of wife abuse. The current research will also examine differences in people's perceptions of husband and wife abuse. In addition, the present study will extend Harris' work by examining the effects of type of abuse (physical versus verbal) and the severity of abuse (moderate, severe) on people's attitudes towards domestic violence.

It is important to examine these issues in order to address and understand any biases the public may have. Through an increased understanding of people's views of domestic violence, it is hoped that services for both the victims and offenders can be improved.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of the current research is to examine people's perceptions of domestic violence. Research participants were given one of eight scenarios that describe a violent incident. The effects of gender of the abuser (male, female) type of abuse (physical or verbal), and the degree of abuse (severe or moderate) on people's attitudes will be examined. The study is designed to assess general attitudes toward a violent situation, attitudes toward the victim, and attitudes toward the offender. The specific research questions are as follows:

General issues in regards to the abusive situation

1. How serious do the participants rate the incident?
2. How violent do the participants rate the incident?
3. What actions do the participants report that they would take?
4. Do the participants believe that the incident is a criminal offence, and do they believe that the offender should be punished?

Attitudes towards the Abused

1. How do the participants rate the emotional suffering of the victim?
2. How do the participants rate the physical suffering of the victim?
3. How much sympathy do the participants feel towards the victim?

4. How likable do the participants rate the victim?

5. What are the participant's beliefs in regard to the past behavior of the victim?

6. How responsible do the participants report the victim is for the abuse?

7. How much do the participants agree with the victim's use of physical force?

8. How much do participants agree with the victim's use of retaliation?

Attitudes towards the Abuser

1. How do the participants rate the emotional suffering of the offender?

2. How do the participants rate the physical suffering of the offender?

3. How much sympathy do the participants feel towards the offender?

4. How likable do the participants rate the offender?

5. What are the participants' beliefs in regard to the past behavior of the offender?

6. How responsible do the participants report the offender is for the abuse?

7. How much do the participants agree with the offender's use of physical force?

8. How much do participants agree with the offender's use of retaliation?

Participants

A total of 172 students in an undergraduate psychology class at the University of Alberta participated in this study. The age of participants ranged from 17 to 48, with a mean of 20.76 and a standard deviation of 6.05. The majority of the participants were female, 65.12% compared with 34.88%, who were male. This uneven distribution of males to female, although undesirable, is comparable to similar studies (Harris & Cook, 1994) Participants were volunteers who took part in the study during their scheduled class time. All of the students attending class that day chose to participate. The students were required to read and sign a consent form (see Appendix A)

Design

The basic design of the experiment was a 2 (gender of the offender: male or female) X 2 (type of aggression: verbal or physical) X 2 (severity of abuse: moderate or severe) randomized groups factorial design.

Materials and Procedure

Each participant read a short scenario and completed a questionnaire. All materials in this study were adapted or created to examine differences in

participants' perceptions and attitudes toward domestic violence.

All participants read a fictitious scenario depicting a scene of domestic violence. In each scenario readers were informed that the abusing spouse had arrived home and became angry with the other, because their child had drawn on the walls while s/he was on the phone. A disagreement ensued and cumulated in an act of aggression (Appendix B). The scenarios were adapted from Harris & Cook (1994).

Eight variations of the scenario were created. In half of the scenarios the wife is the abuser and the husband is the victim; roles are reversed in the other half. To manipulate the type of violence, half of the participants read that the abuser either physically harmed (physical aggression) the victim; half read that the abuser verbally threatened (verbal aggression) the victim. Severity of abuse was also manipulated. In the physical abuse condition, the abuser pushed the victim (moderate abuse) or threw an ashtray that hit the victim in the head (severe abuse). In the verbal abuse condition the abuser threatened to leave (moderate abuse) or threatened to leave and not allow the victim to see their child again (severe abuse).

The acts of aggression were based on Family Violence in Canada (1994). This publication provides an overview of domestic violence, although it does

not address husband abuse. This publication also provides a list of severe and moderate acts of aggression. To ensure the validity of these scenarios, three individuals, with extensive training and experience in the fields of domestic violence and anger management, reviewed them and provided feedback, which lead to minor revisions in the senerios.

After reading the scenario, participants completed a questionnaire that was developed to measure their perceptions and attitudes regarding the incident (Appendix B). The questionnaire used in this study was similar to those used in other research on the perceptions of domestic violence (Harris & Cook, 1994; Pierce & Harris, 1993). As with previous studies, issues such as seriousness, likability, responsibility and observer reaction were addressed. Unlike previous studies, the questions were framed in terms of the wife or husband, not the victim or abuser. This was to ensure that the participants were not influenced by the negative labeling of the characters in the scenarios. As well, the emotional and physical suffering of the abuser was addressed along with the sympathy the participants felt towards the abuser.

Eight questions that required a yes/no response were included in the questionnaire. These allowed the participants to confirm or deny that they felt the incident was serious, violent or if the husband and wife had suffered any

harm, either emotional or physical. Additionally, participants were asked if they felt the incidents were a criminal offence and if the offender should be punished.

The remaining nineteen questions were measured on a five point rating scale. The questions asked participants to rate a wide variety of aspects of the incident. Topics such as their perceptions of the seriousness of the issue, the emotional and physical suffering of the characters, the responsibility of the characters and what actions the participants would take, if they witnessed the incident were covered in the rating scales.

The experiment was run in an undergraduate psychology class. All participants completed the tasks during their regularly scheduled class time. At the beginning of the class, the course instructor introduced the researcher, who then asked the participants whether they would be willing to participate in a study about perceptions of domestic violence. She told the students that they would be asked to read a scenario and then answer several questions regarding the scenario. Students were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could opt out of the experiment at anytime. As well, they were informed that their participation was anonymous and that only aggregate data would be reported.

The researcher and another graduate student distributed the packages, which had been shuffled prior to the experiment (this ensured random assignment to conditions). The packages consisted of a consent form (Appendix A), one of the eight scenarios (Appendix B) and the questionnaire (Appendix C). Participants were then asked to carefully read the scenario and answer the questions. Students worked through both phases of the experiment at their own speed. After all the packages were returned, the researcher thanked the participants for their time and debriefed them, explaining the research design (see Appendix D).

Data analysis

The completed questionnaires were input into a data file in SPSS 7.5. This program was then used to analyze the data. It was necessary to recode the data. In the original questionnaire, all questions were asked in terms of the husband and wife to avoid biasing the participants. When the data were input the questions were recoded in terms of victim and abuser according to the wife and husband's roles in the scenario. Once the data had been recorded, 2 X 2 X 2 General Factorial Anovas were run on the dependent measures to test for significant main effects and interactions.

Ethical Practice

To ensure that this study followed ethical considerations, the design was reviewed by the Department of Educational Psychology Research and Ethics Committee at the University of Alberta. This review process is required for all research conducted in the Department of Educational Psychology using human participants. It was also approved by the Department of Psychology Human Ethics Review Committee. This was necessary since the experiment was run in an undergraduate psychology class. In accordance with ethical guidelines, participants were required to sign a consent from and were only identified by participant number.

Chapter 4

Results

The results below are presented under three main headings. Participants' general reactions to the incident include findings on their views about how serious and violent they perceived the incident to be, how they would react to it if they witnessed the scene and whether they thought the incident constituted a criminal offence. The second set of research findings concerns attitudes towards the abuser in the scenario:. The third section presents results on attitudes toward the victim in the scenario.

General reaction to the incident

The first set of research questions dealt with the participants' attitudes and reactions to the incident. Specifically participants were asked to rate the seriousness of the incident, the violence of the incident, the likelihood that they would intervene if they witnessed the incident, and the criminality of the incident.

Seriousness of the incident. Participants were asked with a yes/no question whether they thought the abuse was serious or not. Table A presents

the percentage of respondents who indicated that the incident was serious. Those participants who indicated that they thought the incident was serious were then asked to rate the seriousness of the abuse on a five point scale. On the seriousness ratings there was no main effect for gender of abuser [F(7,147)=1.08 n.s]. That is, there was no difference in the ratings of seriousness for scenarios that featured a female abuser and scenarios with a male abuser. There was a significant main effect of type of abuse [F(7,147)=26.68.p<.05]. Verbal abuse (M=2.87, SD=.94) was rated less than physical abuse (M=3.63, SD= .90). In other words, people rated the abuse more serious when it was physical rather than verbal abuse. Degree of abuse approached significance [F(7,147)=3.69 .p< 0.06]. Not surprisingly, severe abuse (M=3.42, SD=.98) was rated as more serious than moderate abuse (M=3.14, SD=.98). There were no significant interactions.

Violence of the incident. The participants also responded to a yes/no question asking if the incident was violent or not. Table B presents the percentage of respondents who indicated that the incident was violent. The respondents who reported the incident as violent were then asked to rate the level of violence on a five point scale. The ratings of the scenarios' violence, followed a similar pattern as those for seriousness of the incident. Gender had

no significant effect on the university students ratings of the violence of the situation [F(7,35)=.51, n.s.]. That is scenarios involving male abusers and scenarios involving female abusers were perceived as equally serious. A main effect was found for type of abuse [F(7,35)=43.60.p<.05], with verbal abuse (M=2.33, SD=.70) perceived as less violent than physical abuse (M=3.45, SD=.84). Degree of abuse [F(7,35)=9.21. p< 0.05] was also significant. University students felt that moderate abuse (M=2.83, SD=.83) was significantly less violent than severe abuse (M=3.21, SD=1.04). There were no significant interactions.

Reported actions of the participants. The participants were asked to rate on a five point scale how likely they would be to call the police if they witnessed the incident. There was a main effect for gender of the abuser [F(7,164) = 7.06.p< 0.05]. Scenarios with male abusers (M=2.27, SD=1.23) received higher ratings than those with female abusers (M=1.87, SD=1.11). That is, university students reported that they would be more likely to intervene if the victim was female rather than male. There was also a main effect for type of abuse [F(7,164) = 82.21. p< 0.05]. The participants reported that they would be more likely to call the police in the case of physical abuse (M=2.72, SD=1.22) than in the case of verbal abuse (M=1.39,

SD=.65). As well, there was a main effect for degree of abuse [$F(7,164) = 9.55$. $p< 0.05$]. The participants indicated that they would be more likely to call the police if the abuse was severe (M=2.30, SD=1.12) than if the abuse was moderate (M=1.85, SD=1.05). There were no significant interactions.

Criminality of the incident. The participants were asked to answer in a yes/no format if the incident was a criminal offence. Table C presents the percentage of participants who rated the scenarios as a criminal offence. From Table C it is evident that a higher percentage of participants reported that the incident was criminal if the abuser was male rather than female, except in the instance of moderate verbal abuse. None of the participants rated the moderate verbal abuse as criminal. As well, a greater percentage of participants reported that the incident was criminal when the abuse was physical rather than verbal. Degree of abuse also affected criminality. Higher numbers of university students rated severe abuse as criminal than rated moderate abuse as criminal Participants were also asked if the offender should be punished. See Table D for the percentage of participants who thought the offender should be punished. These results present a similar pattern to the criminality of the incident. Table D demonstrates that there is a difference for male and female offenders. That is, higher percentages of participants agreed that male abusers

should be punished. As well, more students agreed that perpetrators of physical abuse should be punished than agreed that perpetrators of verbal abuse should be punished. Students also reported that abusers who inflicted severe abuse should be punished over those who inflicted moderate abuse.

Attitudes towards the Abused

The next set of research questions were aimed at determining how the participants viewed the abused person in the scenario. Specifically, the students were asked to rate the emotional suffering of the victim, the physical suffering of the victim, how much they liked the victim, whether they thought the victim acted this way in the past, and how responsible the victim was for the incident. The results for each of the questions are reported below.

Participants' perceptions of the victim's emotional suffering. The university students were asked to rate the emotional suffering of the victim on a five point scale. There was no significant effect for gender [$F(7,158) = .42$, n.s.]. That is, the participants did not report more emotional suffering for male victims versus female victims. There was a main effect for type of abuse [$F(7,158) = 15.89$ $p<.05$]. Physical abuse was rated higher ($M=4.06$, $SD=.74$) than verbal abuse ($M=3.70$, $SD=1.04$). In other words, university students perceived the victims' emotional suffering to be greater in cases of

physical abuse than in verbal abuse. Degree of abuse also affected the students perceptions of the victim's emotional suffering [F(7,158)= 5.76.p<.05]. Severe abuse was rated as causing greater emotional suffering (M= 4.17, SD= .78) than moderate abuse (M= 3.54, SD= .96). There were no significant interactions.

Participants' perceptions of the victims' physical suffering. Ratings of physical suffering were similar to the university students' perceptions of emotional suffering. Gender did not have any significant effect on the ratings of physical suffering [F(7,94)=1.23, n.s.]. This suggests that the participants perceived the physical suffering of male and female victims as equal. There was a main effect for type of abuse [F(7,94)=52.86.p<.05]. Again, physical abuse (M= 3.56, SD=.85) was rated as causing more suffering than verbal abuse (M= 2.00, SD=1.13). Degree of abuse also had a significant effect [F(7,94) = 14.21 .p<.05]. Severe abuse (M= 3.67, SD=1.03) was rated as causing greater physical suffering than moderate abuse (M= 2.98, SD=.95). There were no significant interactions.

Sympathy for the abused. The participants' rated the degree of sympathy they felt towards the victim on a five-point scale . In the ratings of sympathy, there was no main effect for gender[F(7,164) = 2.37, n.s.]. This

indicates that participants reported feeling equally sympathetic towards male and female victims of spousal abuse. There was a main effect for type of abuse[F(7,164)=13.97> p.05], with the participants reporting more sympathy for the victims of physical abuse (M=3.98, SD=.80) than verbal abuse (M= 3.46, SD= .97). There was no main effect for degree of abuse [F(7,164) = 1.77, n.s.]. Additionally, there were no significant interactions.

Likability of the abused. The participants were asked to rate how much they liked the victim using five point scale. There were no main effects for gender [F(7,162) = 1.21 n.s.], type of abuse [F(7,162) = .08 n.s.] or degree of abuse [F(7,162)= .233 n.s]. As well, there were no significant interactions. In other words, the participants ratings of likability of the victim were not affected by any of the manipulated variables.

Past behavior of the abused. The participants were asked if they believed the victim had acted in a similar manner before. Again, there were no main effects for gender of the victim [F(7,158)= .40 n.s.], type of abuse[F(7,158) = .06 n.s.], or degree of abuse[F(7,158)= 2.48] and no significant interactions. Thus, the students' beliefs in the past behavior of the victim were not affected by any of the manipulated variables.

Victim responsibility. The university students were asked to rate, on a

five point scale, how responsible they felt the victim was for the incident. When the participants rated victim responsibility there was a main effect for gender [$F(7,164)=10.68$, $p<.05$]. That is, the participants felt that female victims ($M=2.16$, $SD=1.04$) were less responsible than male victims ($M=2.66$, $SD=.83$). Type of abuse [$F(7,164)=5.59$, $p< .05$] also had a significant effect. Participants felt that victims of verbal abuse ($M=2.61$, $SD=1.02$) were more responsible than victims of physical abuse ($M=2.23$, $SD=.89$). There was no main effect for degree of abuse [$F(1,164) = .39$, n.s.] and no interactions.

Participants attitudes towards victims' use of physical force. Participants were asked to rate, on a five-point scale, their attitudes towards the victim's use of physical force. In rating the use of physical force there was a main effect for gender [$F(7,164)=17.45$ $p<.05$]. Participants agreed more with the victim's use of physical force when the victim was a female ($M=4.33$, $SD=1.08$) than when the victim was male ($M=4.98$, $SD=.15$). Additionally, there was a main effect for type of abuse [$F(7,164) = 10.03$. $p<.05$]. The participants reported that they agreed more with the victim's use of physical force when it was physical abuse ($M=4.40$, $SD=1.07$) versus verbal abuse ($M=4.91$, $SD=.33$). There was no effect for degree of abuse [$F(1,164) = 2.28$ n.s.]. There was,

however, a significant interaction between type of abuse and gender [F(1,164)=10.07.< p.05]. Figure 1 shows this interaction. In Figure 1, it is evident the students' disagreed less strongly with female victim's use of physical force, but only when the abuse was physical. There were no other significant interactions.

Participants' attitudes towards the victims' use of retaliation. The students were also asked to rate how much they agreed with the victim's use of retaliation on a five-point scale. A significant effect of gender [F(7,163) = 19.91,p < 0.05] was found. Participants rated the female victim's (M=3.86, SD=1.32) use of retaliation lower than the male victims(M= 4.56, SD=.89). That is, participants disagreed less with the victims' use of retaliation when the victim was female than male . There was no main effect of type of abuse [F(7,163) = .492, n.s.] or degree of abuse [F(7,164) = 1.01, n.s.]. An interaction between type of abuse and gender (F(1,163) = 7.97 < p.05) was found (see Figure 2). Figure 2 illustrates that this interaction was similar to the interaction in the students' attitudes towards physical force. The students disagreed more with male victim's use of retaliation, but only when the abuse was physical. When the abuse was verbal, they disagreed equally. There were no other significant interactions.

Participants' attitudes towards the offenders

The last set of research questions was designed to assess the participants' attitudes towards the abuser. Specifically, students rated the degree of emotional suffering of the abuser, the degree of physical suffering of the abuser, the participants' sympathy for the abuser, likability of the offender, the past behavior of the abuser, the offender's responsibility, the offender's right to use physical force, and the offender's use of retaliation.

Participants' perceptions of the offenders' emotional suffering. As with the victims' emotional suffering, the participants were asked to rate the emotional suffering of the offender on a five-point scale. When the students rated the emotional suffering of the offender there was a main effect for gender [$F(7,138)=19.88$ $p<.05$]. The emotional suffering of the female abusers ($M=3.48$ $SD=.95$) was rated as higher than that of the male abusers ($M=2.72$ $SD=1.05$). In other words, the university students felt that female abuser suffered more emotionally than the male abusers . There were no significant effects for type of abuse [$F(7,138)=.24$ n.s.]or severity of abuse [$F(7,138)=1.68$ n.s.] and no significant interactions.

Participants' perceptions of the offenders' physical suffering. The

participants were also asked to rate the degree of the abuser's physical suffering on a five-point scale. The ratings of the physical suffering were similar to the ratings of emotional suffering. A main effect for gender[$F(1,33)=6.08, p<.05$] was found. The physical suffering of the female abusers ($M=1.59$, $SD=.84$) was rated higher than the physical suffering of the male abusers ($M=1.00$, $SD=0.00$). In other words, the participants reported that female abusers suffered more than male abusers. In fact, none of the participants felt the male suffered physically. There was no effect for type of abuse [$F(7,33) =.39$ n.s.]or degree of abuse [$F(7,33) = .57$, n.s.]. There were no significant interactions.

Sympathy for the abuser. The participants rated the degree of sympathy they felt for the abuser on a five-point scale. There was a significant effect of gender [$F(1,164) = 12.95$, $p< 0.05$]on ratings of sympathy, with university students having more sympathy for female abusers ($M= 2.38$, $SD= .88$) than male abusers ($M= 1.88$, $SD=.90$). There was no significant effect for type of abuse [$F(1,164)=0.07$, n.s] or degree of abuse [$F(1,16) =.01$, n.s.]. As well, there were no significant interactions.

Likability of the abuser. The participants were asked to report how much they liked the abuser on a five-point scale. There were no main effects

for the gender of the abuser [F(1,163) = .37) n.s.], the type of abuse [F(1,163) = 1.20 n.s.] or the degree of the abuse [F(1,163) = .70 n.s.]. In other words the reported likability of the abuser was not affected by any of the independent variables. There were no significant interactions.

Past behavior of the abuser. Participants were also asked to rate the likelihood that the offender had acted this way in the past. There was no main effect for gender [F(7,157) = .52 n.s.], type of abuse [F(7,157) = 2.60 n.s.] or degree of abuse [F(7,157)=.95 n.s.]. There was a significant three way interaction [F(7,157)= $p< 0.00$] in the participants' reported belief that the offender had acted this way in the past (see Figure 3 and Figure 4). Figure 3 demonstrates that female abusers were judged more likely to have behaved that way in the past in the case of severe verbal abuse than in the case of moderate verbal abuse or physical abuse. Figure 4 illustrates that participants reported that male offenders were more likely to have behaved in a similar manner in the past in moderate verbal abuse situations versus severe verbal abuse situations and more likely to have been moderately verbal abusive than physically abusive.

Offender responsibility. Participants were asked to rate offender responsibility on a five point scale. The was no main effect for gender of

abuser[F(7,164)=.01, n.s.]. In the participants' rating of offender responsibility, there was a main effect for type of abuse [F(7,164)=33.20, p< .05]. Offender responsibility was rated higher for physical abuse (M=4.18, SD=.72) than for verbal abuse (M=3.36, SD=1.10). That is, students rated offenders significantly more responsible in situations of physical abuse than verbal abuse . There was no main effect for degree of abuse [F(7,164) = .60, n.s.] and there were no significant interactions.

Participants' attitudes towards offenders' use of physical force. Students were asked to rate, on a five point scale, if the offender should use physical force. The was a main effect for gender of the abuser [F(7,164) = 5.95, p.<.05]. Although the students' disagreed with the offenders' use of physical force , they disagreed less strongly with male offenders (M= 4.77, SD= .71) use of physical force than with female offenders (M=4.98, SD=.15) use of physical force. This finding should be interpreted with some caution since there was little variation in the responses of the participants, except for one outlier, who may have skewed the data. There was no main effect for type of abuse, [F(7,164) =.35 n.s.] or degree of abuse [F(7,164) = .002 n.s.]. There were no significant interactions.

Participants attitudes towards offenders' retaliation. Participants were

asked to rate how much they agreed with the offenders' use of retaliation. The effect of gender of abuser approached significance [$F(1,163)=3.73$ $p=0.06$] with participants disagreeing more with the female offenders' use of retaliation ($M=4.71$, $SD=.68$) than the male offenders use of retaliation ($M=4.56$), $SD=.97$). There were no main effects for type of abuse [$F(1,163) = 1.94$ n.s.] or for degree of abuse [$F(1,164) =.53$ n.s.]. As well, there were no significant interactions.

Summary of Results

General attitudes towards the situation. In participants' ratings of seriousness there was a main effect for type of abuse. That is, the university students reported that physical abuse was more serious than verbal abuse. There was also a main effect for degree of abuse. Expectedly, the participants rated severe abuse as more serious than moderate abuse. The participants' responses to the violence of the abuse followed a similar pattern to their ratings of seriousness. There was a main effect for type of abuse, with participants rating physical abuse as more violent than verbal abuse. There was also a main effect for degree of abuse. The university students rated severe abuse as more violent than moderate abuse. Thus, overall, the abuse was rated as more serious and more violent when it was physical or when it was severe. The gender of the offender and victim did not influence the participants' ratings of the seriousness or violence of the situation.

When participants were asked how they would respond if they witnessed the incident, there was a main effect for gender of the abuser. Participants reported that they would be more likely to call the police if the abuser was male than female. There was also a main effect for type of abuse. Students indicated that they would be more likely to call the police if the abuse was

physical rather than verbal. As well, there was a main effect for degree of abuse. Participants reported that there was a greater likelihood that they would call the police if the abuse was severe rather than moderate.

With regard to the criminality of the incident, higher percentages of participants agreed that the incident was criminal if the abuser was male rather than female. As well, higher numbers of participants agreed that the incident was a criminal offence in the situation of physical abuse than in the case of verbal abuse. Finally, more participants agreed that the severe abuse situations were criminal than the moderate abuse situations. A similar pattern of results occurred when the participants were asked if the offender should be punished. More participants agreed that male offenders should be punished. Higher percentages of participants reported that perpetrators of physical abuse should be punished than perpetrators of verbal abuse. As well, more participants agreed with the punishing of offenders involved with severe abuse than those involved with moderate abuse.

Attitudes towards victims. In the participants' reports of the emotional suffering of the victim, there was a main effect for type of abuse and degree of abuse. Participants rated the emotional suffering of the victim to be greater in physical abuse situations than in verbal abuse situations. They also reported

that the emotional suffering was greater for victims of severe abuse rather that victims of moderate abuse. The ratings of physical suffering followed a similar pattern to the ratings of emotional suffering. That is, participants rated the physical suffering of victims to be greater in instances of physical abuse, than in verbal abuse, and greater in instances of severe rather than moderate abuse. In terms of sympathy for the victim, the university students were more sympathetic to victims of physical abuse than to victims of verbal abuse.

In the participants' ratings of victim responsibility there was a main effect for gender. That is, the university students reported that female victims were less responsible for the abuse than male victims. Additionally, there was a main effect for type of abuse. Participants rated victims of physical abuse as less responsible than victims of verbal abuse.

In the ratings of participants' agreement with the victims use of physical force, there was a main effect for gender of the victim, for type of abuse and an interaction between the two. That is, the participants agreed more that female victims should use physical force, but only in situations where they were physically abused. In ratings of the victim's use of retaliation, there was also a main effect for gender and an interaction between gender and type of abuse. As with physical force, participants agreed more that female victims should

retaliate, but only in cases of physical abuse.

Attitudes towards offenders. In rating the emotional suffering of the offenders there was a main effect for gender of the abuser. Participants rated female abusers' emotional suffering as greater than male abusers'. When the university students rated the physical suffering of the abusers there was also a significant effect for the gender of the abuser. As with emotional suffering, the participants reported that female abusers suffer more physically than male abusers. There was also a significant gender effect in the university students reported feelings of sympathy for the abuser. Participants were more sympathetic towards female abusers than towards male abusers.

In terms of the belief that the offender had acted in a similar manner in the past there was a three way interaction. This indicated that participants believed that male abusers were more likely to have acted in a similar manner in the past in the case of moderate verbal abuse, but less likely to have acted that way in the past in the case of severe verbal abuse. Females were rated as more likely to have acted that way in the past in the case of severe verbal abuse.

In rating the offender responsibility there was a main effect for type of abuse. That is, participants felt that the abusers were more responsible in

situations of physical abuse than in the situations of verbal abuse.

There was also a main effect for gender of abuser in the participants' ratings of the abusers' use of physical force. Participants rated male offenders use of physical force as less disagreeable than female offenders use of physical force. This finding should be interpreted with caution. Except for one, all the participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed with male abusers use of physical force. One individual strongly agreed with the male abusers use of physical force. This outlier may have skewed the results.

Chapter 5

Discussion of Findings

General attitudes towards the incident. Although the participants perceptions of the seriousness and violence of the abusive situation appear to be more affected by the type and degree of the abuse than the gender of the abuser, a gender bias similar to that found in Harris and Cook (1994) and Harris (1994) is evident in other areas. For example, in reported participant intervention, more participants stated that they would be willing to call the police if the victim were a female than if the victim were a male. This suggests that although the participants may not explicitly recognize the situation as more serious or violent they do recognize that they should intervene in the wife abuse scenario more so than the husband abuse scenario. This finding, on its own, may indicate that wife abuse is seen as more problematic than husband abuse. One possible explanation for this difference may be the belief that a male victim is more capable of dealing with the situation without third party intervention than a female or that it is not as harmful for the male.

Even the fact that the participants rated physical abuse as more serious than verbal abuse may imply a disparity in real life cases of spousal abuse. Previous research (Björkquist et al., 1992; Lagerspetz, Björkquist & Patton,

1988) has indicated that women favor alternative forms of aggression. That is, rather than the direct use of physical violence, they tend to use more indirect or psychological forms of violence. The fact that the present results indicate that physical abuse is taken more seriously than verbal abuse may suggest that verbal aggression in our society is not seen as harmful. Consistent with Harris and Cook (1991), gender inequality was also evident in the participants' ratings of the criminality of the event and of who should be punished. A higher number of participants agreed that the male abuser was committing a criminal act and should be punished. Again, this suggests that the university students in this study viewed male violence as more unacceptable than female violence. In addition, more participants reported that males should suffer the consequences of their actions.

Attitudes towards victim. The results of the current research indicate that the participants' views regarding victims of spousal abuse were influenced more by the type of abuse and the degree of abuse than the gender of the abuser. Even though the participants reported that they would be more likely to intervene in the case of female victims, they rated the emotional and physical suffering of the victims to be equal. Although similar ratings of suffering were found for both male and female victims, the participants agreed

more that the female victims should retaliate and use physical force. This may be a reflection of the implicated societal value that men should not hit women but it is acceptable for women to hit men. It is also possible that this reflects the societal expectation that men are able to deal with pain and discomfort. Our society tends to place a great deal of value on a man's ability to be strong and to cope with physical and emotional distress, without complaining.

Attitudes towards offenders. The present research also provides insight into the way society views male versus female aggressors. Many of the differences that the participants reported about the offenders were affected by the gender of the abuser. The students believed that the female abusers suffered more both physically and emotionally. As well, they reported greater sympathy for the female abusers. This suggests that people have greater empathy for female abusers and are willing to accept aggression in females but not in males. Perhaps this is due to the belief that women will not be aggressive unless provoked. Thus, women are justified in their aggressive behavior. It is also possible that the participants have an underlying belief in the role of women as victims. Therefore, their perceptions of the scenarios are modified to be consistent with this belief even when the evidence would suggest otherwise. These feelings of empathy may also contribute to the

differences in the participants' ratings of the criminality and punishment of the male and female offenders.

Implications

The gender biases demonstrated in other studies, (Harris, 1994; Harris and Cook, 1994) were evident in many of the areas explored in this study. The university students reported that they would be less likely to intervene and call the police in the case of husband abuse than that of wife abuse. This indicates a belief that males are more capable of protecting themselves and handling the emotional and physical discomfort of the situation. People are more likely to view wife abuse as a societal problem and intervene.

The fact that the participants rated physical abuse as more serious and violent than verbal abuse also has implications in the ways that husband and wife abuse are viewed. It has been suggested that men and women tend to use different forms of aggression (Björkquist et al., 1992; Lagerspetz, Björkquist & Patton, 1988). For example, women might use verbal and psychological abuse, rather than physical abuse. These methods rely less on physical strength and although they can be as damaging in psychological terms, they are not generally acknowledged to the same extent as physical abuse.

Participants also rated the male victims as more responsible for the

incident than female victims, although still less responsible than the abusers. These results indicate that men who are abused are seen as having a more active role in the abuse situation than women. This distribution of responsibility is similar to the victim blaming that took place when wife abuse was first addressed as a societal issue. During this time it was felt that the wife would leave the abusive situation if she were unhappy. The results suggest that the public feels much the same way about male victims today. The prevalent attitude may be that husbands have the ability to stop the abuse if they are unhappy. This result may even indicate that the public perceive the husband as instigating the abuse.

This inequality is further evident in the participants' views of the offender. Interestingly, the participants reported that they believed that the female abuser suffered more both physically and emotionally than the male abuser. This may be a result of the inability of people to perceive women as violent and in the role of the aggressive partner. There may be the tendency to believe that women are unable to be violent without suffering emotionally and physically. As well, it could be that the participants felt that women are more remorseful of their actions or that they believed that the female abusers actions were in response to male aggression. It would seem that the participants are

placing the women in the role of victim even when there is no evidence that they are being victimized. It is possible that these beliefs are the reason that they feel that female abusers should not be punished and that husband abuse is not a criminal action. It has been suggested that police respond in a similar manner when dealing with cases of domestic violence. (Pearson, 1996). Research on actual cases of violence demonstrates that women receive more lenient sentences in the legal system (Baltes, 1981) for comparable acts of aggression.

Overall, the results of this study imply that there are gender inequalities in public perceptions of victims and perpetrators of husband and wife abuse. However, it is my contention that men and women deserve to be given the same consideration. Society, as a whole, needs to recognize that both men and women may be responsible for family violence. We need to widen our perspective and realize that domestic violence, no matter who the victim or perpetrator is, can be detrimental to the health of the family and the individuals involved. We are starting to acknowledge, with the men's movement, as with the feminist movement in the 70's, that spousal abuse does not always necessarily mean that a husband is beating a wife. Slowly, agencies are beginning to address and equalize this situation, with the creation of anger

management classes for both women and men. The present research, however, indicates that the two situations are still not viewed equally.

Problems and Issues

The sample group of psychology students is a possible weakness of the present research. They were not representative of the general population. Indeed, they were individuals who had an interest in psychology which may suggest a greater sensitivity to the issues. If the participants had been more representative of the general population it is possible that stronger gender biases would have been found.

It was also difficult to give the participants enough information to convey the serious long term effects of domestic violence. This is especially true in the case of verbal and psychological abuse which, in reality, tend to take place over a long period of time and consist of a wide variety of subtle actions and comments. As a result, the short scenarios used in this research may not have provided enough information regarding the family situation for the participants to accurately judge the incidents.

It is possible that the variable "degree of abuse" was not manipulated successfully. When the respondents were asked to whether or not the incidents were serious, there was no significant differences between the moderate and the

severe conditions (see Table A). Although, the five point rating scale of severity did result in a significant difference, the difference was small. Severe abuse (M=3.42, SD = .98) was only slightly higher than moderate abuse (M=3.14, SD=.98). This suggests that the degree of abuse was not manipulated adequately. Indeed, many of the significant differences were quite small. For example, the difference in the participants' ratings of their likelihood of calling the police were significant, but small. Female victims (M= 2.27, SD=.83) were only slightly more likely to receive aid than male victims (M=1.87, SD = 1.11). Given that these are self reports of action, it is extremely unlikely that either the male or the female victims would receive aid. Therefore, even with a significant difference, the actual behavior towards male and female victims is probably not significant.

Another problematic area are violations of the assumptions necessary for analysis of variance. The first assumption is normality of distribution. Many of the dependent measures are highly skewed, and often floor or ceiling effects occurred (see Tables E - I). This results in a violation of the assumption of normality. Although analysis of variance is considered to be quite robust when the assumption of normality is violated, a second more serious violation also occurred.

The second assumption violated is homogeneity of variance. This is a fundamental assumption in analysis of variance. The assumption is that the samples are drawn from the same population, and therefore have identical variance. In the current study, the variances of the scores are significantly heterogeneous (see Table E - I). This represents a significant problem in the validity of the data.

These violations of the assumptions of normality and homogeneity indicate that the results of the current study may be questionable. Therefore, future researchers in this area should attempt to compensate for these types of violations to the assumptions. More specifically, future researchers might consider larger sample sizes (to minimize the effect of non-normality), or equalizing the sample size (to minimize the effects of un equal population distributions). Alternatively, statical procedures that are less sensitive to violations of the assumptions could be utilized. For example, a multi-variate analysis of variance or a Kruskal-Wallis H test could be completed instead of an analysis of variance.

Further Research

Further research should concentrate on the effects of long term emotional abuse and on educating the public in terms of husband abuse. As

well, it is necessary to examine the responses of the support systems for these individuals, (i.e., how do social workers and police respond to these situations) and determine whether education on the effects of husband abuse would aid in influencing legal and policy changes. In the coming years it is likely that the growing awareness of family violence will encompass all forms of abuse, not only abuse that reinforces our expectations of who the victims are and who the abusers are.

Additionally, there is a need to assess the psychological effects of husband abuse on the victims and abusers. In order to fully understand the issue of husband abuse, it is necessary to determine the similarities and differences between husband abuse and wife abuse. It will be vital for researchers to abandon their preconceived notions regarding the abusers and victims of spousal abuse and approach the subject with an unbiased perspective. It is essential to increase the knowledge in this area and develop specific intervention plans for all forms of abuse.

Concluding remarks

The present research indicates husband abuse is not seen as serious an issue as wife abuse. Opponents of the idea of husband abuse argue that men and women do not have equal power in our society nor do they have equal

physical strength. The current study would suggest that the general public holds similar views regarding husband abuse. This would indicate that a grave disservice is being committed. It is wrong to suggest that the male victims of spousal abuse deserve any less respect or consideration than their female counterparts. In order to resolve this societal issue the biases uncovered in the present research must be acknowledged and resolved.

Table A. Percentage of respondents that felt incident was serious

Degree of abuse	Type of abuse	Gender of offender	Percentage
Moderate	Physical	Male	96%
		Female	84%
	Verbal	Male	71%
		Female	74%
Severe	Physical	Male	100%
		Female	95%
	Verbal	Male	79%
		Female	84%

Table B. Percentage of respondents that felt incident was violent

Degree of abuse	Type of abuse	Gender of offender	Percentage
Moderate	Physical	Male	95%
		Female	100%
	Verbal	Male	57%
		Female	53%
Severe	Physical	Male	100%
		Female	96%
	Verbal	Male	58%
		Female	63%

Table C. Percentage of respondents that felt incident was criminal offence

Degree of abuse	Type of abuse	Gender of offender	Percentage
Moderate	Physical	Male	75%
		Female	50%
	Verbal	Male	0%
		Female	0%
Severe	Physical	Male	81%
		Female	68%
	Verbal	Male	21%
		Female	5%

Table D. Percentage of respondents that felt offender should be punished

Degree of abuse	Type of abuse	Gender of offender	Percentage
Moderate	Physical	Male	48%
		Female	40%
	Verbal	Male	0%
		Female	0%
Severe	Physical	Male	71%
		Female	59%
	Verbal	Male	21%
		Female	5%

Table E. Means and standard deviations of measures of participants perceptions towards the incident

Dependent variable	Degree of abuse	Type of abuse	Gender of offender	Mean	Standard deviation
Rating of violence	severe	physical	male	3.76	.99
			female	3.64	.90
		verbal	male	2.42	.51
			female	2.53	.87
	moderate	physical	male	3.38	.65
			female	3.04	.67
		verbal	male	2.23	.72
			female	2.07	.49
Rating of severity	severe	physical	male	3.71	1.15
			female	3.76	.77
		verbal	male	2.94	.77
			female	3.15	.98
	moderate	physical	male	3.50	.78
			female	3.55	.92
		verbal	male	2.52	1.12
			female	2.83	.79
Reported calling the police	severe	physical	male	3.33	1.11
			female	2.71	1.12
		verbal	male	1.79	.88
			female	1.18	.39
	moderate	physical	male	2.68	1.36
			female	2.14	1.06
		verbal	male	1.33	.66
			female	1.32	.57

Table F. Means and standard deviations of measures of participants perceptions of the victims' suffering

Dependent variable	Degree of abuse	Type of abuse	Gender of offender	Mean	Standard deviation
Rating of victim' physical suffering	severe	physical	male	4.20	.93
			female	3.68	.65
		verbal	male	2.75	1.26
			female	2.00	.82
	moderate	physical	male	3.46	.66
			female	2.90	.64
		verbal	male	1.00	.00
			female	1.80	1.30
Rating of victims' emotional suffering	severe	physical	male	4.42	.87
			female	4.19	.60
		verbal	male	3.78	.73
			female	3.80	.52
	moderate	physical	male	4.17	.70
			female	3.90	.89
		verbal	male	3.25	1.21
			female	3.38	1.12
Reported sympathy towards victim	severe	physical	male	4.24	.94
			female	3.77	.61
		verbal	male	3.58	.61
			female	3.67	.91
	moderate	physical	male	4.04	.81
			female	3.86	.79
		verbal	male	3.45	1.22
			female	3.18	1.00
Victim likability	severe	physical	male	3.14	.79
			female	2.81	.68
		verbal	male	3.00	.47
			female	3.00	.84
	moderate	physical	male	3.00	.80
			female	2.95	.67
		verbal	male	2.95	.90
			female	2.82	.85

Table G. Means and standard deviations of measures of participants perceptions of the victims' behaviour

Dependent variable	Degree of abuse	Type of abuse	Gender of offender	Mean	Standard deviation
Rating of victims responsibility	severe	physical	male	1.71	.64
			female	2.68	.84
		verbal	male	2.26	.80
			female	2.81	.87
	moderate	physical	male	2.13	1.03
			female	2.38	.74
		verbal	male	2.55	1.37
			female	2.77	.87
Victim retaliation	severe	physical	male	3.76	1.34
			female	4.95	.21
		verbal	male	4.15	1.26
			female	4.33	1.01
	moderate	physical	male	3.62	1.31
			female	4.76	.70
		verbal	male	3.95	1.39
			female	4.18	1.14
Victims' past behaviour	severe	physical	male	2.76	1.14
			female	2.68	.84
		verbal	male	2.50	.92
			female	2.14	1.11
	moderate	physical	male	3.00	1.02
			female	2.61	1.04
		verbal	male	2.62	1.20
			female	2.50	.74
Victims' use of physical force	severe	physical	male	3.67	1.43
			female	4.96	.21
		verbal	male	4.74	.56
			female	4.95	.22
	moderate	physical	male	4.04	1.12
			female	5.00	.00
		verbal	male	4.91	.29
			female	5.00	.00

Table H. Means and standard deviations of measures of participants perceptions of the offenders' suffering

Dependent variable	Degree of abuse	Type of abuse	Gender of offender	Mean	Standard deviation
Rating of offenders' physical suffering	severe	physical	male	1.00	.00
			female	1.60	1.08
		verbal	male	1.00	.00
			female	2.00	.82
	moderate	physical	male	1.00	.00
			female	1.29	.49
		verbal	male	1.00	.00
			female	1.67	.82
Rating of offenders' emotional suffering	severe	physical	male	2.75	1.07
			female	3.90	.75
		verbal	male	2.93	.96
			female	3.25	1.02
	moderate	physical	male	2.65	1.04
			female	3.26	.93
		verbal	male	2.58	1.24
			female	3.45	1.00
Reported sympathy towards offender	severe	physical	male	1.71	.72
			female	2.36	.85
		verbal	male	2.11	.81
			female	2.33	.91
	moderate	physical	male	1.88	.95
			female	2.52	1.08
		verbal	male	1.86	1.08
			female	2.32	.72
Offender likability	severe	physical	male	1.76	.83
			female	2.05	.72
		verbal	male	2.16	.83
			female	2.05	.86
	moderate	physical	male	1.78	.80
			female	1.95	.50
		verbal	male	2.00	.82
			female	2.09	.87

Table I. Means and standard deviations of measures of participants perceptions of the offenders' behaviour

Dependent variable	Degree of abuse	Type of abuse	Gender of offender	Mean	Standard deviation
Rating of offenders responsibility	severe	physical	male	4.33	.73
			female	4.27	.70
		verbal	male	3.37	1.12
			female	3.33	1.06
	moderate	physical	male	4.04	.91
			female	3.32	1.32
		verbal	male	4.10	.44
			female	3.41	.96
Offender retaliation	severe	physical	male	4.43	1.17
			female	5.00	.00
		verbal	male	4.52	.70
			female	4.57	.70
	moderate	physical	male	4.46	.98
			female	4.80	.68
		verbal	male	4.42	1.03
			female	4.45	.91
Offenders' past behaviour	severe	physical	male	2.14	1.01
			female	2.27	.70
		verbal	male	2.39	1.04
			female	1.76	1.04
	moderate	physical	male	2.55	1.10
			female	2.17	1.04
		verbal	male	1.86	.91
			female	2.14	.94
Offenders' use of physical force	severe	physical	male	4.76	.54
			female	4.95	.21
		verbal	male	4.84	.50
			female	4.95	.22
	moderate	physical	male	4.71	.86
			female	5.00	.00
		verbal	male	4.82	.85
			female	5.00	.00

Figure 1. Participants' ratings of victims' right to use physical force.

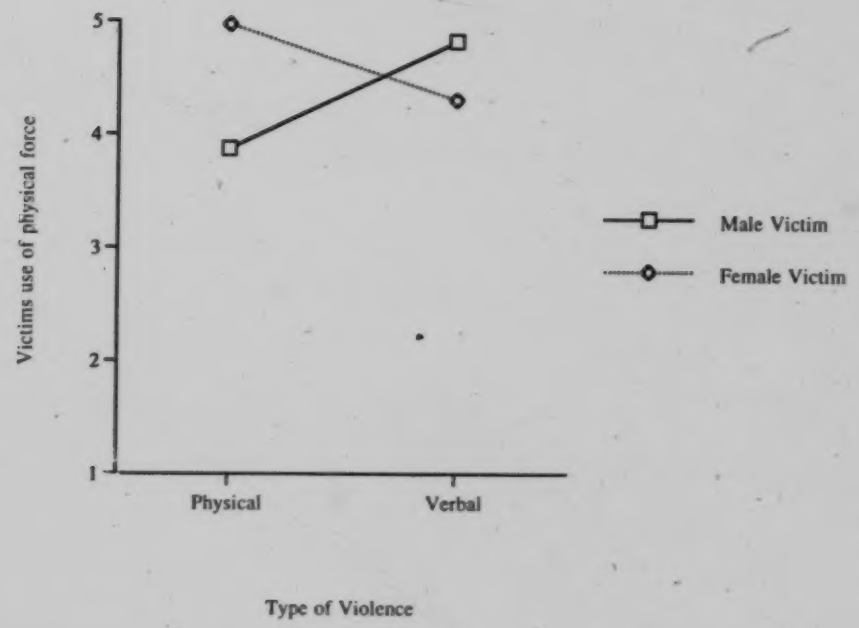


Figure 2. Participants' ratings of the victims' right to retaliate.

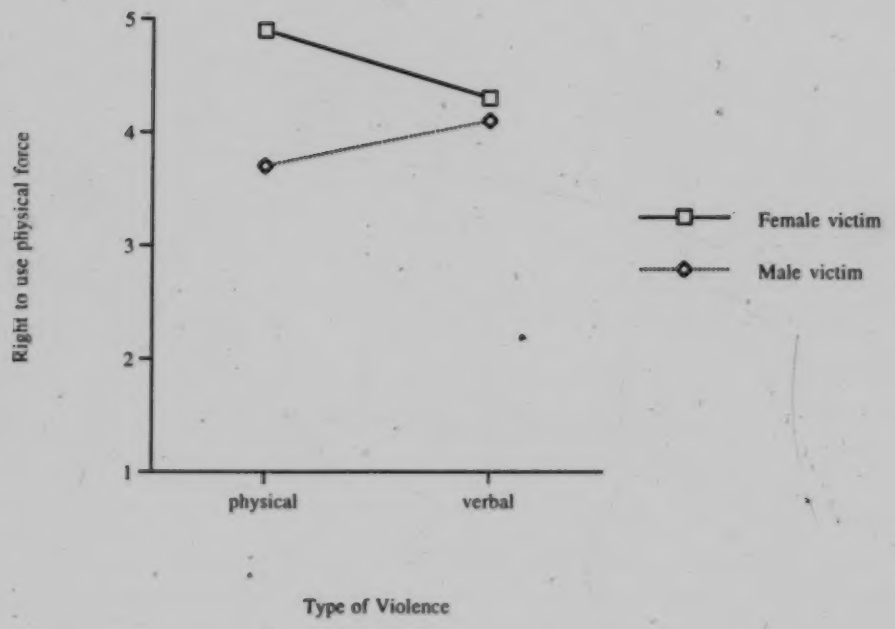


Figure 3. Participants' ratings that the female abuser has acted this way in the past.

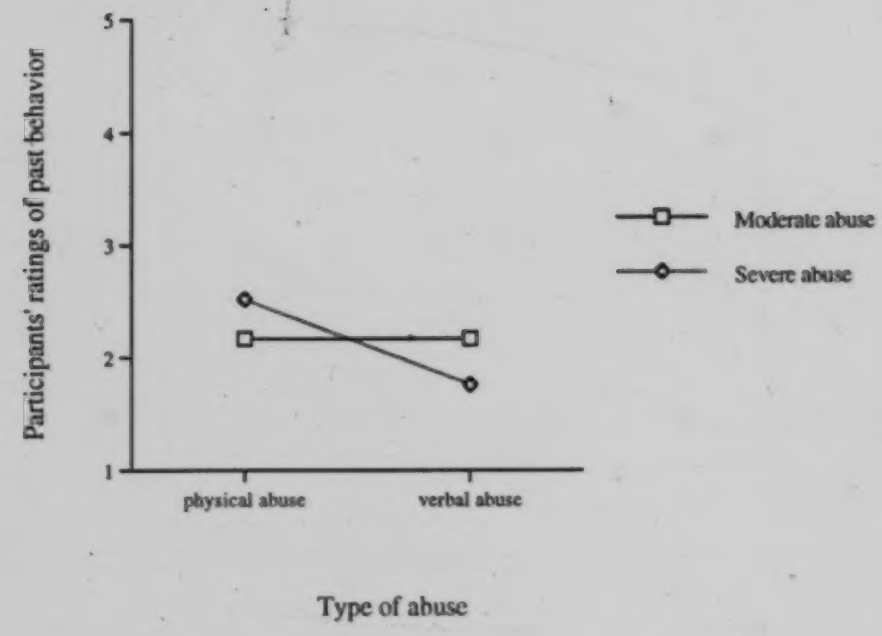
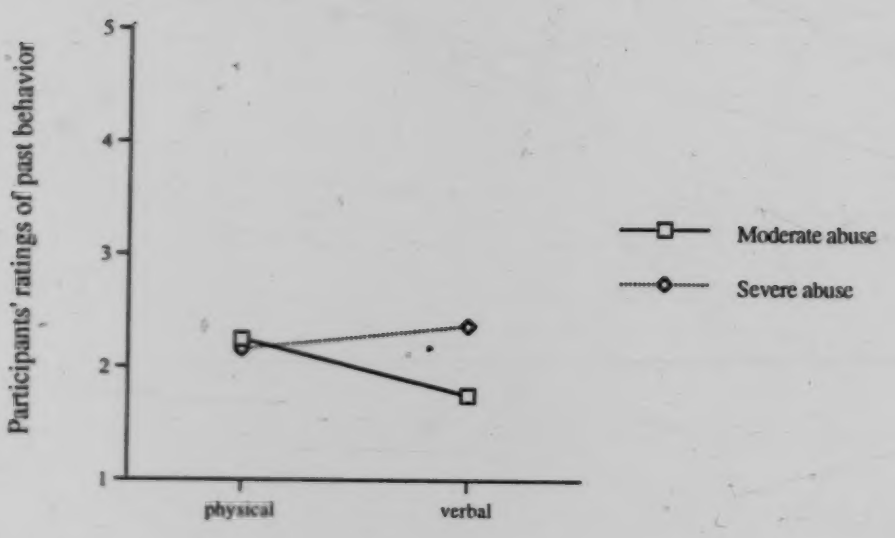


Figure 4. Participants' ratingd that the male abuser has acted this way in the past.



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Appendix A

Consent Form

Investigators:
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University of Alberta

Supervisor:
Dr. Judy Cameron Dept. of Educational Psychology
University of Alberta

Purpose of research:

The purpose of the current research is to examine individuals attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence.

Procedure:

Each participant will be asked to read a short scenario depicting a domestic incident, after which the participant will be asked to complete a questionnaire regarding the incident.

Other information:

Participants are free to withdraw from the study at anytime. The participants will not be identified in anyway and only the researcher will have access to the individual data.

I have read and understood this consent form

Name_____ Date_____

If you have any questions please contact me at: kama@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca

Appendix B

Scenerios of Domestice Violence

Male abuser- Verbal - Severe

Edmonton AB. -- Last night police responded to an anonymous complaint of a domestic dispute. Two police officers arrived at the location of the dispute and conducted interviews with Mike Smith and his wife, Mary Smith. According to Officer Kevin Brown, of the Edmonton City Police Department, Mrs. Smith, a 28 year old white female, told the officers that she had been home all day. She had the day off work and stayed at home to take care of their 3 year old son, Jason. At approximately 5:00 p.m. she went into the kitchen to make a phone call. While she was in the kitchen, Jason threw his crayons on the floor and began drawing on the wall. At this point, Mr. Smith arrived home from his job at the travel agency. He saw the mess and his wife was still on the phone. He yelled at her and said:

"What the hell are you doing? Look at this bloody mess. Get off the damn phone."

Mrs Smith hung up the phone, glared at her husband and said

"I'm sick and tired of your moods. Pick up the damn mess yourself".

Mr. Smith hollered:

"If you don't get it together, I'm leaving and I'm taking Jason with me. You'll never see either of us again."

Male abuser - Verbal - Moderate

Edmonton AB. -- Last night police responded to an anonymous complaint of a domestic dispute. Two police officers arrived at the location of the dispute and conducted interviews with Mike Smith and his wife, Mary Smith. According to Officer Kevin Brown, of the Edmonton City Police Department, Mrs. Smith, a 28 year old white female, told the officers that she had been home all day. She had the day off work and stayed at home to take care of their 3 year old son, Jason. At approximately 5:00 p.m. she went into the kitchen to make a phone call. While she was in the kitchen, Jason threw his crayons on the floor and began drawing on the wall. At this point, Mr. Smith arrived home from his job at the travel agency. He saw the mess and his wife was still on the phone. He yelled at her and said:

"What the hell are you doing? Look at this bloody mess. Get off the damn phone."

Mrs Smith hung up the phone, glared at her husband and said

"I'm sick and tired of your moods. Pick up the damn mess yourself".

At this point, Mr. Smith hollered:

"If you don't get it together, our marriage is through"

Male abuser - Physical- Moderate

Edmonton AB. -- Last night police responded to an anonymous complaint of a domestic dispute. Two police officers arrived at the location of the dispute and conducted interviews with Mike Smith and his wife, Mary Smith. According to Officer Kevin Brown, of the Edmonton City Police Department, Mrs. Smith, a 28 year old white female, told the officers that she had been home all day. She had the day off work and stayed at home to take care of their 3 year old son, Jason. At approximately 5:00 p.m. she went into the kitchen to make a phone call. While she was in the kitchen, Jason threw his crayons on the floor and began drawing on the wall. At this point, Mr. Smith arrived home from his job at the travel agency. He saw the mess and his wife was still on the phone. He yelled at her and said:

"What the hell are you doing? Look at this bloody mess. Get off the damn phone."

Mrs Smith hung up the phone, glared at her husband and said

"I'm sick and tired of your moods. Pick up the damn mess yourself".

At this point, Mr. Smith grabbed his wife and pushed her into the cupboard leaving a large bruise on her back.

Male abuser - Physical - Severe

Edmonton AB. -- Last night police responded to an anonymous complaint of a domestic dispute. Two police officers arrived at the location of the dispute and conducted interviews with Mike Smith and his wife, Mary Smith. According to Officer Kevin Brown, of the Edmonton City Police Department, Mrs. Smith, a 28 year old white female, told the officers that she had been home all day. She had the day off work and stayed at home to take care of their 3 year old son, Jason. At approximately 5:00 p.m. she went into the kitchen to make a phone call. While she was in the kitchen, Jason threw his crayons on the floor and began drawing on the wall. At this point, Mr. Smith arrived home from his job at the travel agency. He saw the mess his wife was still on the phone. He yelled at her and said:

"What the hell are you doing? Look at this bloody mess. Get off the damn phone."

Mrs Smith hung up the phone, glared at her husband and said

"I'm sick and tired of your moods. Pick up the damn mess yourself".

At this point, Mr. Smith picked up an ashtray and threw it at his wife. The ashtray hit her on the back of the head and left a large gash that required 12 stitches.

Female abuser - Verbal - Severe

Edmonton AB. -- Last night police responded to an anonymous complaint of a domestic dispute. Two police officers arrived at the location of the dispute and conducted interviews with Mary Smith and her husband, Mike Smith. According to Officer Kevin Brown, of the Edmonton City Police Department, Mr. Smith, a 28 year old white male, told the officers that he had been home all day. He had the day off work and stayed at home to take care of their 3 year old son, Jason. At approximately 5:00 p.m. he went into the kitchen to make a phone call. While he was in the kitchen, Jason threw his crayons on the floor and began drawing on the wall. At this point, Mrs. Smith arrived home from her job at the travel agency. She saw the mess and her husband was still on the phone. She yelled at him and said:

"What the hell are you doing? Look at this bloody mess. Get off the damn phone."

Mr Smith hung up the phone, glared at his wife and said

"I'm sick and tired of your moods. Pick up the mess yourself".

Mrs. Smith hollered:

"You stupid idiot! If you don't get it together, I'm leaving and I'm taking Jason with me.

You'll never see either of us again."

Female abuser- Verbal -Moderate

Edmonton AB. -- Last night police responded to an anonymous complaint of a domestic dispute. Two police officers arrived at the location of the dispute and conducted interviews with Mary Smith and her husband, Mike Smith. According to Officer Kevin Brown, of the Edmonton City Police Department, Mr. Smith, a 28 year old white male, told the officers that he had been home all day. He had the day off work and stayed at home to take care of their 3 year old son, Jason. At approximately 5:00 p.m. he went into the kitchen to make a phone call. While he was in the kitchen, Jason threw his crayons on the floor and began drawing on the wall. At this point, Mrs. Smith arrived home from her job at the travel agency. She saw the mess and her husband was still on the phone. She yelled at him and said:

"What the hell are you doing? Look at this bloody mess. Get off the damn phone."

Mr Smith hung up the phone, glared at his wife and said

"I'm sick and tired of your moods. Pick up the mess yourself".

At this point, Mrs. Smith hollered:

"If you don't get it together, our marriage is through"

Female abuser- Physical - Moderate

Edmonton AB. -- Last night police responded to an anonymous complaint of a domestic dispute. Two police officers arrived at the location of the dispute and conducted interviews with Mary Smith and her husband, Mike Smith. According to Officer Kevin Brown, of the Edmonton City Police Department, Mr. Smith, a 28 year old white male, told the officers that he had been home all day. He had the day off work and stayed at home to take care of their 3 year old son, Jason. At approximately 5:00 p.m. he went into the kitchen to make a phone call. While he was in the kitchen, Jason threw his crayons on the floor and began drawing on the wall. At this point, Mrs. Smith arrived home from her job at the travel agency. She saw the mess and her husband was still on the phone. She yelled at him and said:

"What the hell are you doing? Look at this bloody mess. Get off the damn phone."

Mr Smith hung up the phone, glared at his wife and said

"I'm sick and tired of your moods. Pick up the mess yourself".

At this point, Mrs. Smith grabbed her husband and pushed him into the cupboard leaving a large bruise on his back.

Female abuser- Physical- Severe

Edmonton AB. -- Last night police responded to an anonymous complaint of a domestic dispute. Two police officers arrived at the location of the dispute and conducted interviews with Mary Smith and her husband, Mike Smith. According to Officer Kevin Brown, of the Edmonton City Police Department, Mr. Smith, a 28 year old white male, told the officers that he had been home all day. He had the day off work and stayed at home to take care of their 3 year old son, Jason. At approximately 5:00 p.m. he went into the kitchen to make a phone call. While he was in the kitchen, Jason threw his crayons on the floor and began drawing on the wall. At this point, Mrs. Smith arrived home from her job at the travel agency. She saw the mess and her husband was still on the phone. She yelled at him and said:

"What the hell are you doing? Look at this bloody mess. Get off the damn phone."

Mr Smith hung up the phone, glared at his wife and said

"I'm sick and tired of your moods. Pick up the mess yourself".

At this point, Mrs. Smith picked up an ashtray and threw it at her husband. The ashtray hit him on the back of the head and left a large gash that required 12 stitches.

Appendix C

Questions

Please read the questions pertaining to the scenario you just read and answer them carefully.

Age:_____ Sex: (circle one) M F

1. Was the incident violent? (circle one) yes no
   if yes please rate how violent you felt it was on this 5-point scale
   1 2 3 4 5
   not at all violent extremely violent

2. Was the incident serious? (circle one) yes no
   if yes please rate how serious you felt it was on this 5-point scale
   1 2 3 4 5
   not at all serious extremely serious

3. Do you think the incident was a criminal offence? (circle one) yes no
   if yes, do you think the offender should be punished yes no

4. Did this incident caused the husband physical suffering (circle one) yes no
   if yes, please rate how much physical suffering it cause the husband on this 5-point scale
   1 2 3 4 5
   none a great deal

5. Did this incident caused the wife physical suffering (circle one) yes no
   if yes, please rate how much physical suffering it cause the wife on this 5-point scale
   1 2 3 4 5
   none a great deal

6. Did this incident cause the husband emotional suffering (circle one) yes no
   if yes, please rate how much emotional suffering it cause the husband on this 5-point scale
   1 2 3 4 5
   none a great deal

7. Did this incident cause the wife emotional suffering (circle one) yes no
   if yes, please rate how much emotional suffering it cause the wife on this 5-point scale
   1 2 3 4 5
   none a great deal

8. How responsible was the wife for the incident?
   1 2 3 4 5
   not at all responsible completely responsible

9. How responsible was the husband for the incident?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all responsible				completely responsible

10. How much sympathy do you feel for the husband?

1	2	3	4	5
none				a great deal

11. How much sympathy do you feel for the wife?

1	2	3	4	5
none				a great deal

12. Overall, how much do you like the wife?

1	2	3	4	5
not at alll				a great deal

13. Overall, how much do you like the husband?

1	2	3	4	5
not at at all				a great deal

14. How likely would you be to call the police if you witnessed this incident

1	2	3	4	5
not at all likely				very likely

15. The husband should retaliate.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree				strongly disagree

16. The wife should retaliate.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree				strongly disagree

17. The husband has acted this way in the past.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree				strongly disagree

18. The wife has acted this way in the past.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree				strongly disagree

19. The wife in this incident has the right to use physical force.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree				strongly disagree

20. The husband in this incident has the right to use physical force.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree				strongly disagree

Appendix D

Debriefing

Is everyone done? I'd like to tell you a little bit more about what we doing here today. As you know we're looking at people's perceptions of domestic violence. Specifically, we interested in how the genders of the victim and the offender affects people's perceptions of domestic violence. So we manipulated the genders of the victim and the offender. Some of you recieved senerios where Mr. Smith was the victim and some of you received senerios where Mrs. Smith was the victim. Previous research has demonstrated that husband abuse occurs almost as frequently as wife abuse (Steinmetz, 1977), but it receives minimal attention. Other research has demonstrated that female aggression is not taken as seriously as male aggression (Harris, 1991). For example, Harris (1991) manipulated gender of aggressor and victim and their relationship. This study showed that gender had a significant effect on how serious participants rated the aggression. Individuals tended to view a women's aggression towards a man as a great deal less serious than a man's aggression towards a women, especially if they were romantically involved. Now, an important question is, why do people take husband abuse less seriously than wife abuse. Some researchers (Sauders, 1986; Walker, 1989) have suggested that the reason that husband abuse is not given the same amount of attention because men are better able to defend themselves and are not hurt to the same extent as women.

In the present study we are looking at several issues pertaining to domestic violence. First we want to confirm that husband abuse is perceived differently than wife abuse. Next, we want to look at the other factors that affect perceptions of abuse and if they interact with gender. For example, if differences in perceptions of spousal abuse are due primarily to differences in physical strength we would expect that verbal abuse would be rated similarly for both male and female victims, and physical abuse would be rated more seriously for female victims than for male victims. Thanks very much for participating. Without the help of people like you, we couldn't answer most important scientific questions in Psychology. You've been a great help. Do you have any questions? Thanks again.